

Graffiti 'Markers' May Be Put Out of Minor's Reach

By Craig McGuire

A bill addressing the problem of graffiti by limiting the accessibility of graffiti paraphernalia is currently being considered by both the New York State Senate and Assembly.

"This bill is long overdue," said Assemblywoman Eileen Dugan, a co-sponsor on the legislation. "Citizens expect their government to regulate items that cause damage to property and people. Chemicals, explosives, guns, etc. are not readily available on the open market for anyone to buy whenever they want because their sale and use is regulated."

Assembly Bill 2078, and its Senate companion Bill 3565, targets merchants who sell aerosol paint cans and broad-tipped indelible markers.

The merchants who carry these items would be required to obtain a license. Sale of this graffiti paraphernalia to minors under the age of 18 would result in revocation of that license.

It is already illegal in New York State to sell these products to minors under the age of 18.

The legislation would not impact on the state budget, and merchants would not be charged any fees to obtain the license.

City Councilman Anthony Weiner agrees that the proposal is a good idea, and said while he and many of his colleagues have proposed bills aimed at reducing graffiti, it will take more than just legislation.

"Enforcement is the problem," said Weiner. "The key to this problem is whether the police will be able to effectively monitor and ticket merchants who sell these products to minors."

Many merchants seem to approve of the idea.

Marty Golden, president of the 5th Avenue Board of Trade in Bay Ridge, said, "I support this type of legislation, as long as the merchants are not required to pay a fee for it."

John Logue, president of the Voice of Bay Ridge Business, also supports the proposal.

"As a business person I am hesitant to support any further licensing," said Logue, "but like the other merchants, I am tired of looking at the graffiti. I support this proposal as long as the merchants are not burdened with any licensing fees."

"Unfortunately for residents of New York City, and others throughout the state, the growth in graffiti vandalism demands that we regulate the sale of the tools of the trade," said Dugan. "Such action would fight graffiti before it appears, instead of cleaning up property after it is vandalized."

And, while merchants who sell the items to minors would be subject to the revocation of their license, this bill does not provide for any fines.

"I believe that any merchant found selling these products to minors should be fined heavily," said Golden, who runs the Bay Ridge Manor. "We are all in here to make a living, but not at the expense of the neighborhood."

"It is extremely frustrating for merchants who are constantly cleaning off the graffiti," said Logue, owner of Once Upon a Sundae. "There should be greater punishments imposed upon the offenders, as well as increased education of this issue in the schools."

The bill, introduced by majority party representatives in both houses, is seen as likely to pass.

The bill is currently be-

ing considered by the Senate Committee on Consumer Protection and the Assembly Committee on Consumer Affairs and Protection.

Justification of the legislation in the document reads, "Despite past measures designed to limit the amount of vandalism caused by graffiti, many communities in New York State continue to experience such damage. The explosion in graffiti vandalism in the last few years has contributed to an increase in urban blight. By prohibiting the sale of aerosol spray paint cans and broad tipped indelible markers (two commonly used graffiti items), except by those licensed to sell them, local governments will be better able to curb the spread of graffiti."

Explained Dugan, "Although this will not completely solve the problem, the establishment of a licensing system will give local governments a new option to better regulate those items most often used to deface property."

Climate of the Arts and Impact on the Brook Community."

Panelists were Brook Academy of Music President Harvey Lichtenst New York City Department of Cultural Affairs Deputy Commissioner Janet Oliv and Board of Education Director of Arts and Culture Education Helen Stabler.

The debate was moderated by Holly Freedman the executive director of New York State Arts Council.

The afternoon program featured three separate workshops on the visual performing, and media/literary arts, conducted by skilled facilitators who helped artist and other participants identify and discuss and evaluate issues and propose possible courses of action.

BACA/The Brooklyn Arts Council is a coordinating educational and cultural service organization serving Brooklyn.

"From Greenpoint to Coney Island, and Bedford-Stuyvesant to Red Hook, the arts are an integral and vital part of life in our borough," said Golden.

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